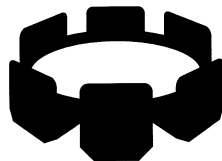


# **BRINGING EMPLOYERS INTO THE IMMIGRATION DEBATE: THE PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF THE SURVEY FINDINGS**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Immigration makes an important contribution to the Canadian economy. Immigrants establish businesses that create jobs, stimulate the economy by increasing the demand for local goods, and fill niches at the high and low ends of the labour market. As the Canadian-born population ages, immigration will become even more important. It is expected that by 2011, immigration will account for all of Canada's labour force growth, and by 2026, for all of Canada's population growth.

To better understand the issues relating to the integration of immigrants into the workforce, the Public Policy Forum undertook a research project that focused on employers' perceptions of "recent immigrants," who were defined as those immigrants who had arrived in Canada within the last 10 years. The research sought to:

- determine the extent to which employers think foreign trained/educated individuals can fill their current or future labour market shortages;
- identify any issues or concerns employers may have had when hiring and/or assessing the skills of foreign-trained/educated individuals;
- identify any barriers to integrating foreign-trained/educated individuals into the employer's labour force; and
- better understand the importance of foreign trained/educated employment by a number of factors including city, province and company size.

The Public Policy Forum commissioned Environics to undertake a survey of 2091 employers and to conduct 10 focus groups in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Moncton. For a summary of their survey results entitled: *Survey of Canadian Employers and Human Resource Managers*, please visit [www.ppforum.ca](http://www.ppforum.ca).

The *survey* revealed that employers have a positive attitude toward immigrants and immigration. Employers see many positives and few negatives to hiring recent immigrants and welcome the opportunity to participate in strategies that seek to better integrate immigrants into the workforce.

However, the survey and focus groups also found that employers:

1. overlook immigrants in their human resource planning;
2. do not hire immigrants at the level that they were trained; and
3. face challenges integrating recent immigrants into their workforce.

The findings suggest that the economic and labour market needs of immigrants cannot be seen in isolation from their social and cultural integration. Furthermore strategies to address issues relating to continuing challenges must be different in destination areas and non-destination areas, and different for large and small companies. To address these on-going challenges, the Public Policy Forum recommends that:

*1. Employers in regions with a high concentration of immigrants should be informed and engaged in discussions about selection and levels.*

Engaging employers and collecting appropriate human resource data can help identify future human resource needs that might be filled through the immigration program. Collecting information on these skills and communicating them to employers will help employers to better understand how they can more strategically and effectively access the skills of immigrants in their communities. Once employers are aware of these skills they should become engaged in the discussion about the appropriate selection process and immigration levels.

*2. Employers should be engaged in the development of regional strategies.*

Developing a vibrant immigrant community and a welcoming host community is an important part of this strategy. Employers can play an important role.

*3. Employers should be encouraged to develop strategies to hire immigrants more effectively.*

The policy challenge is to develop a communications strategy aimed at employers that will not only promote the idea of hiring more recent immigrants, but also promote strategic recruitment of immigrants.

It is also important to highlight the broader impact that underemployment has on the Canadian economy. The Conference Board of Canada has identified a loss of \$4 to \$6 billion annually to the Canadian economy.

*4. Hiring practices that may discriminate against immigrants should be addressed.*

Employers should be encouraged to think critically about the skills they need and their hiring practices. Any skills testing undertaken should be appropriate for the position so as not to inadvertently discriminate against immigrants.

The role and impact of regulators should be examined. Any unnecessary barriers being placed on immigrants by regulators should be addressed.

Skills testing should also be able to identify gaps in skills. Affordable educational or work training programs should be available to fill these gaps.

*5. Promote existing credential recognition services and develop new services or procedures where appropriate.*

Existing credential recognition services should be promoted to employers. Immigrants who enter the country through the Skilled Worker program should be

encouraged to obtain recognition of their education and credentials before immigrating to Canada.

*6. Improve language training.*

Fully subsidized language training should be available to immigrants in all regions of the country. Additional occupation-specific language training should also be available, especially in areas that have large numbers of immigrants.

*7. Promote and create tools to encourage cultural understanding.*

Manuals, diversity courses and videos that already exist should be promoted, and others should be developed as appropriate. The target audience for these initiatives should be smaller companies, because they have the most difficulty providing services for immigrants.

Other tools, aimed specifically at immigrants, which address and explain some of the cultural business practices in Canada, should be provided to potential immigrants prior to immigration.

*8. Provide Canadian work experience for immigrants, especially in small and medium-sized companies.*

All employers welcome the opportunity to provide work experience for immigrants, with a minimal subsidy required. These work placements should be available in all regions. Work placements should develop immigrants' skills in their career of choice.

Since most job creation happens in small and medium-sized enterprises, emphasis should be on assisting these companies to hire and integrate recent immigrants into their workforce.

## **BRINGING EMPLOYERS INTO THE IMMIGRATION DEBATE: THE PUBLIC POLICY IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

#### *Context*

Immigration makes an important contribution to the Canadian economy. Immigrants establish businesses that create jobs, stimulate the economy by increasing the demand for local goods, and fill niches at the high and low ends of the labour market. As the Canadian-born population ages, immigration will become even more important. It is expected that by 2011, immigration will account for all of Canada's labour force growth and by 2026 for all of Canada's population growth.

Despite the potential benefits of immigration, a growing number of immigrants, are having trouble integrating into the Canadian workforce. A growing number of immigrants, who have higher educational attainment than the average Canadian in the same age groups, are unable to see their diplomas, skills and work experience recognized. Many immigrants are unemployed, underemployed or living in poverty. This is both a social and economic problem, according to a recent Conference Board of Canada study, underemployment costs the country four to six billion dollars annually.

Research conducted by the Canadian Labour and Business Centre<sup>1</sup> suggested many employers, even those experiencing skill shortages in regions with traditionally high levels of immigration, do not see immigration as a way to fill current or future skills shortages. There appears to be a disconnect between a concern about skills shortages and an employer's interest in immigration.

To better understand this disconnect and other issues relating to integrating immigrants into the workforce from the employers' perspective, the Public Policy Forum undertook a research project. It focused on employers' perceptions of "recent immigrants" who were defined as those immigrants who had arrived in Canada within the last 10 years. The research sought to:

- determine the extent to which employers think foreign-trained/educated individuals can fill their current or future labour market shortages;
- identify any issues or concerns employers may have had when hiring and/or assessing the skills foreign-trained/educated individuals;
- identify any barriers to integrating foreign-trained/educated into the employer's labour force; and,
- better understand the importance and nature of foreign-trained/educated employment by a number of factors including city, province and company size.

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<sup>1</sup> CLBC. Perspectives on Immigration: Findings from the Canadian Labour and Business Centre's Survey of Canadian Business, Labour and Public Sector Leaders. Available at: [http://www.clbc.ca/Fitting\\_In/Perspectives\\_on\\_Immigration.asp](http://www.clbc.ca/Fitting_In/Perspectives_on_Immigration.asp).



## *Methodology*

The Public Policy Forum created an advisory committee to oversee all aspects of this project.<sup>2</sup>

After undertaking a call for proposals, the Public Policy Forum commissioned Environics to undertake a survey of 2091 employers. This survey was conducted from June to August 2004. Environics oversaw all issues of sample design, questionnaire design, analysis and reporting in consultation with the advisory committee. To enhance the quantitative results of the survey, Environics also conducted 10 focus groups in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver and Moncton. For a summary of their report entitled: *Survey of Canadian Employers and Human Resource Managers*, please visit [www.ppforum.ca](http://www.ppforum.ca).

To communicate and analyze the public policy implications of research findings, the Public Policy Forum:

- prepared and distributed its own analysis (this report);
- organized a multi-stakeholder conference on November 4, 2004 to discuss research findings; and
- prepared an outcomes report on the conference discussion (to be published at: [www.ppforum.ca](http://www.ppforum.ca)).

The *Survey of Canadian Employers and Human Resource Managers* completed by Environics revealed that employers have a positive attitude toward immigrants and immigration. Employers see many positives and few negatives to hiring recent immigrants and welcome the opportunity to participate in strategies that seek to better integrate immigrants into the workforce.

However, the survey and focus groups also found that employers:

1. overlook immigrants in their human resource planning;
2. do not hire immigrants at the level that they were trained; and
3. face challenges integrating recent immigrants into their workforce.

These findings have important public policy implications that need to be addressed in order to better integrate immigrants into the labour market. This paper will briefly describe each of these findings and then suggest what governments and other sectors could do to address these challenges.

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<sup>2</sup> This advisory committee consisted of representatives from: Human Resources and Skills Development Canada; Citizenship and Immigration Canada; Department of Canadian Heritage; Industry Canada; Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency; British Columbia Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services; Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities; Maytree Foundation; World Education Services; Alberta Ministry of Human Resources and Employment; Nova Scotia Department of Education; Saskatchewan Department of Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs; Alberta International Qualifications Assessment Service; Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et Immigration Québec, Manitoba Labour and Immigration and Canadian Labour and Business Centre.

## Overview of Findings

### *1. Employers overlook immigrants in their human resource planning.*

The survey found that employers, whether located in destination cities like Toronto or non-destination areas such as Atlantic Canada, consistently rank hiring immigrants as a way to address future labour market needs lower than:

- upgrading the skills of current employees;
- implementing specific measures that will encourage current employees to stay with the organization;
- hiring more young people;
- hiring aboriginals;
- changing job descriptions to reallocate work; and
- attracting workers from other organizations or companies.

Despite these results, employers also think that Canada does a good job recruiting immigrants with the necessary skills<sup>3</sup> and are generally happy with the skills of immigrants they do hire. Furthermore, employers are aware that immigrants play an important role in the labour force and will continue to grow as a proportion of the Canadian population.

Fifty-nine percent of survey respondents said that the majority of the recent immigrants they hire have elementary or high school as their highest education level attained. In the private sector, 63 percent indicate the majority of their recent immigrants have high school education or less. These results are surprising given that 46 percent of new immigrants arriving in 2002 held a university degree and an additional 13 percent held some other post-secondary credential.<sup>4</sup>

As the Environics' report describes, there are several reasons why employers overlook immigrants as a way to address their workforce needs. In traditional destination cities, especially Toronto and Vancouver, employers already think that they are hiring immigrants in numbers consistent with the existing population.

In areas where immigrants are not concentrated, employers do not feel that there are enough immigrants to hire, and although many are positive about the idea, they do not see immigration as a realistic long-term strategy because of settlement and retention challenges. In Moncton, employers suggested that immigration initiatives be targeted at a group of 6 to 10 families, so that they can support one another and not feel isolated in their new host community.

### *2. Employers do not hire immigrants at the level at which they were trained.*

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note that employers had more positive attitudes about Canada's success at meeting its humanitarian and family reunification objectives.

<sup>4</sup> CLBC Handbook, 9.

Sixty-five percent of survey respondents said that most of the immigrants they hire are skilled workers. An even higher number (77 percent) think that immigrants do not have training needs that are different from Canadian-born employees. Only 32 percent see a great or slight advantage in ‘salary or wages’ to hiring immigrants (the lowest-ranked potential advantage).

However, 50 percent of survey respondents said that Canadian work experience is either a requirement for employment in their organization or that foreign work experience is not necessarily considered equal to Canadian experience. The public sector is much less likely to accept foreign work experience on par with Canadian work experience.

Canadian work experience is seen as important because it proves that immigrants are able to work in the Canadian work environment (32 percent), that they are able to meet Canadian standards (14 percent) and because it lowers the risk of hiring employees who do not fit into the culture of the organization (11 percent). Employers who hire mostly regulated professionals are much less likely than other employers with no regulated professionals to say that foreign experience is accepted on par with Canadian experience.

These findings suggest that employers are aware that they are not hiring immigrants at levels consistent with their foreign qualifications and work experience. The survey and focus groups explored several potential reasons.

In some cases the immigrants’ foreign credentials may, in fact, not be equivalent. It is beyond the scope of the PPF’s research project to evaluate immigrants’ education and credentials. However, the survey does suggest that if employers do feel that immigrants credentials are not equivalent, this assumption may not be based on personal experience. Almost half of all survey respondents have had no experience verifying the education or work credentials of recent immigrants. Very few can name a credential recognition company.

Some employers may also engage in hiring practices that systematically discriminate against recent immigrants. As focus group discussions explored, employers receive so many résumés that for many positions, it is easy to raise the level of education or training required for a position. It is also easy for employers to accept résumés where the qualifications and experience are familiar to them. Also, some employers, particularly large employers in the public sector, have standardized testing which all employees must undergo, but which is not necessarily related to the skills for the job. This can create a systemic barrier to entrance into the public service. For example, one employer in Vancouver noted that the hospital where she works requires that all employees, regardless of position, take a literacy test. She felt that this test is important because all employees need to be able to read and recognize signs warning of danger or hygiene requirements.

Employers may themselves be benefiting from underemploying immigrants. Focus groups said that employing immigrants in an occupation that requires less than their foreign credentials and education is a “win-win” situation because it provides immigrants

with Canadian work experience and provides the employer with a qualified and loyal employee. For example, one focus group participant in Vancouver noted that an immigrant lawyer who could not be accredited in Canada was an excellent legal clerk in her firm.

Another reason that employers may be underemploying immigrants is a result of the language skills of immigrants. Forty six percent of employers think that immigrants face language and communication barriers in the application phase, 36 percent during interview phase, 22 percent during the second interview/job offer phase. In the focus groups these survey findings were reinforced by employers who complained that even when immigrants present excellent résumés and qualifications they cannot hire them because immigrants are often unable to describe their skills and experience in an interview.

### *3. Employers face challenges integrating recent immigrants into their workforce.*

The survey findings reveal that most employers think that recent immigrants have a very easy (21 percent) or somewhat easy time (46 percent) integrating into the culture of their organizations. In Montreal, the findings are even higher with 40 percent saying immigrants have a very easy time, and 47 percent saying immigrants have a somewhat easy time. The benefits of hiring immigrants that employers emphasized were skills in languages (31 percent), capacity to generate new ideas (25 percent), the organization's reputation (25 percent), development of products and services for multicultural markets (22 percent) and employees' commitment to the organization (21 percent). In focus groups they often praised immigrants' dedication to the organization and eagerness to please their superiors.

However, some employers do face challenges integrating recent immigrants into their organizations. Survey respondents said that they are *very likely* to experience language difficulties (18 percent), communication difficulties (14 percent), verifying foreign work experience (14 percent), lack of Canadian work experience (13 percent). Small and medium-sized companies experience more difficulties than larger companies. These challenges also appear to be lower in Quebec, and higher in Toronto.

When asked to elaborate on what they meant by language skills, focus group participants described difficulty understanding immigrants because of their accents, immigrants who nod as though they understand their instructions but do not, and poor literacy skills which affect the ability of immigrants to work even in technical positions because they are unable to write informal emails between colleagues. Focus group respondents emphasized that immigrants' technical and other skills are equal to or superior to employees born in Canada.

Focus group participants also highlighted several cultural issues relating to integrating immigrants into the workforce. In many cases, they noted that they were happy to accommodate immigrants with different cultural backgrounds. For example, companies, especially larger companies, were happy to provide prayer rooms for Muslim immigrants

and accommodated their times to pray. Many had developed policies on cultural diversity and anti-racism. However, many employers felt that other requests which they categorized as cultural, were more difficult to accommodate. For example, some said that immigrant employees are more likely to need time off to visit family abroad and to deal with family issues.

Some differences, which they also defined as cultural, were contrary to company policy or Canadian values. For example, some employers said that some male immigrants were uncomfortable working for women supervisors.

Employers were also concerned that immigrant employees did not socialize or mingle with other employees. They felt that immigrants are often unavailable or unwilling to participate in workplace social activities and that they eventually become excluded from other employees. In Toronto, employers were also concerned about inter-ethnic conflict between immigrant groups.

Representatives of smaller companies who participated in the focus groups were more likely than larger companies to emphasize the importance of finding an employee who 'fits' into the organization. Survey analysis suggests that small and medium-sized companies require a higher subsidy than large companies to participate in bridging programs for immigrants.

### **Policy Implications and Solutions**

The findings suggest that the economic and labour market needs of immigrants cannot be seen in isolation from their social and cultural integration. They also suggest that strategies to address issues relating to continuing challenges must be different in destination areas and non-destination areas, and different for large and small companies. The following suggestions require the involvement of all levels of governments and sectors.

*1. Employers in regions with a high concentration of immigrants need to be informed and engaged in discussions on selection and levels.*

In order to inform and engage employers it is important to collect human resource data in two areas.

First, employers should become aware of the foreign training and experience of immigrants in the Canadian labour market and in the area where they hire. Collecting information on these skills and communicating them to employees will help employers to better understand how they can more strategically and effectively access the skills they need from immigrants in their communities. This information could be collected by immigrants serving agencies and should be made available locally to employers through employment agencies and headhunter organizations. Information collected on employer requests would also help to identify current and future labour market needs.

Second, employers and governments should develop a better understanding of human resource needs of the labour market. Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) has created the Labour Market Partnership (LMP) program which funds projects that identify human resource issues and “encourage, support and facilitate human resource planning and labour market adjustments which are in the public interest.”<sup>5</sup>

Creating links between labour market needs and immigration is very important, particularly in destination communities. For example, one project funded through LMP sought to identify future human resource and labour market needs in Toronto. The *Toronto Labour Force Readiness Plan* identified that labour force growth would occur in all sectors. However, it also noted that 60% of this growth would occur in occupations that require either a college diploma, an apprenticeship certificate or a high school diploma, with most of the growth in the latter.<sup>6</sup> Given that Toronto is the primary destination for immigrants, Canadian university enrolment is one of the highest in the world, and most immigrants arrive with a university degree, ensuring that Canada’s immigration program reflects the skills needed by employers may facilitate immigrants’ integration into the labour market.

This is not to suggest that Canada should ignore the humanitarian and family reunification goals of the immigration program. However, in order to meet its economic objectives, particularly under the Skilled Worker program, it is important to collect accurate human resource information on both labour market needs and available skills.

## *2. Employers should be engaged in regionalization strategies.*

How do you encourage immigrants to settle outside of Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto? How do you make regional communities more welcoming to immigrants? Given demographic trends, answering these questions is very important to future regional economic development.

Part of the policy answer will lie in ensuring that appropriate employment is available for immigrants and that they are welcomed into the workplace. Engaging employers to develop a regionalization strategy can help to ensure that jobs are available which use immigrants’ skills and that the existing workforce has been encouraged to welcome and support the newcomers.

Another part of the answer will be encouraging the social and cultural integration of immigrants into the local community, and the development of immigrant communities themselves. According to the results of the Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada, most immigrants choose their destination based on the existence of family and friends from the same background.<sup>7</sup> Developing a vibrant immigrant community in

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<sup>5</sup> For more information visit:

[http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/asp/gateway.asp?hr=en/epb/sid/cia/grants/lmp/desc\\_lmp.shtml&hs=pzp](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/asp/gateway.asp?hr=en/epb/sid/cia/grants/lmp/desc_lmp.shtml&hs=pzp)

<sup>6</sup> City of Toronto. *Toronto Labour Force Readiness Plan. Overview.* p. 49.

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-611-XIE/destination.htm>

regional areas is therefore, just as important as promoting their economic and cultural integration. The Department of Canadian Heritage would likely play an important role.

The investment in immigrant communities and cultural integration needs to be communicated to Canadians as a benefit to many stakeholders: the immigrant who settles in a traditional non-destination community; the community that benefits from the immigrant's skills and cultural diversity; and traditional destination communities, in particular Toronto, where infrastructure could be strained if the population growth exceeds its absorptive capacity.

*3. Employers should be encouraged to develop strategies to hire immigrants more effectively.*

The findings by Environics suggest that employers believe that they have already maximized hiring immigrants as a human resource solution.

The policy challenge is to develop a communications strategy aimed at employers that will not just promote the idea of hiring more recent immigrants, but promote the idea of strategically recruiting immigrants more effectively. This will require that policymakers communicate to employers the impact that underemployment will have on the employers' organizations. These impacts include:

- poor morale;
- increased turnover, which increases human resource time and costs;
- missed opportunities to increase productivity; and
- loss of some of the benefits of hiring immigrant employees that employers themselves have identified (eg: capacity to generate new ideas).

It is also important to highlight broader impacts that underemployment has on the Canadian economy.

The federal government should explore the costs and benefits of expanding the designated groups under employment equity to include recent immigrants. The data collected through the Legislated Employment Equity Program (LEEP) and the Federal Contractors Program (FCP) would be a useful tool to understanding how immigrants are being hired and to identify and address any continuing barriers.

*4. Hiring practices that inadvertently discriminate against immigrants should be addressed.*

Employers should be encouraged to think critically about the skills they need and their hiring practices. Policy makers should work with employers to develop familiarity with foreign credentials and credential recognition services so that recent immigrants with these skills are not automatically discounted early in the hiring process. This could mean promoting and developing a series of tools such as brochures, manuals or websites that would clearly and simply:

- highlight education and credential recognition services;
- give examples of equivalent education; and
- provide a list of questions that could be asked during an interview to help verify the credentials.

Any skills testing undertaken for a position by an employer should be appropriate for the position so as not to inadvertently discriminate against immigrants. They should not demand language skills that are not required in the position, nor should the tests be culturally biased.

A secondary aim of skills testing (the primary one from the employer's perspective to find a suitable candidate) should be to identify gaps in skills. Affordable educational or work training programs should be available to fill these gaps. These programs should be accessible to employers with minimal impact on their daily business. If an employer identifies a skills gap and refers an immigrant to training, it might be possible for example, to give the employer a small incentive to hire the immigrant while he or she is undergoing training.

Similarly, the requirements imposed by professional bodies and regulators should also be examined. Some employers in the focus groups complained that regulators were setting standards that are increasingly too hard to meet and that this was limiting their pool of potential candidates.

#### *5. Promote existing credential recognition services and develop new services where appropriate.*

There is a need to promote existing credential recognition services. These services should be promoted to employers and legitimized through an employer-targeted campaign.

Immigrants should continue to be informed about how best to present their foreign education and work experience (e.g., translated documents, copies of equivalencies).

Immigrants who enter the country through the skilled worker category should be encouraged to get their credentials recognized before immigrating to Canada. In Australia this requirement is often attributed to the country's success in integrating immigrants into high-paying, highly skilled positions. This will require further coordination at the national level of accrediting and regulatory bodies and of credential recognition services.

#### *6. Improved language training.*

Fully subsidized language training should be available to immigrants in all regions of the country. Additional occupation-specific language training should also be available, especially in areas where there is a concentration of immigrants.



Under the Enhanced Language Training Initiative, and through cost-sharing partnership with provinces, territories, municipalities, community organizations, employers and education institutions, Citizenship and Immigration is dedicating \$20 million per year toward work-specific language training. It is essential that the leanings and outcomes of these projects are shared.

Any new courses or tools should be developed in consultation with employers to ensure that they effectively meet employers' needs.

#### *7. Create tools to encourage cultural understanding.*

Existing manuals, diversity courses and videos that promote cultural understanding in the workplace should be promoted to employers. Other tools should be developed where appropriate. Employers may wish to use these tools with all employees as part of their regular orientation.

Additional tools, which focus on small and medium sized business, may need to be developed and distributed. These tools should be easily used by employers, effective but not time consuming, and relevant to the workplace (i.e., office versus outdoor work) or industry. These initiatives should focus on smaller companies because they have the most difficulty providing services for immigrants.

Other tools, aimed specifically at immigrants, which address and explain Canadian business culture and practices, could be provided as part of occupation-specific language training. It could also be designed as an online-tool or video to be distributed to embassies so that potential immigrants can better understand the cultural context in Canada prior to their arrival.

#### *8. Provide Canadian work experience for immigrants, especially in small and medium-sized companies.*

Most employers indicated that they would welcome the opportunity to provide work experience for immigrants, with a minimal subsidy required.

In Toronto, *Career Bridge* is an initiative of Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council, a multi-stakeholder group which includes employers, and is funded in part by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. It has just completed a successful pilot phase consisting of 51 paid internships in 30 organizations. *Career Bridge* will be expanding its services to offer 150 new internship by March 31, 2005. Learnings from this program should be shared as it may be a model for other regions.

According to the *Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours*, in 2002, 62 percent of new jobs were small businesses (defined as less than 100 employees).<sup>8</sup> Since most job creation happens in small and medium-sized enterprises, emphasis should be on assisting these

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<sup>8</sup> Statistics Canada, *Survey of Employment, Payrolls and Hours* (SEPH), September 2003

companies to hire and integrate recent immigrants into their workforce. Given the time and resources required to access and arrange immigrant placements, and the strain that this might put on smaller companies, an intermediary (potentially at the local level, but with national connections to promote data sharing and learnings) should be created to facilitate the employment of immigrants in small and medium-sized companies.

### **Further Research**

The Public Policy Forum's research creates a greater level of understanding of the barriers that immigrants still face being hired and integrating into the Canadian workforce from the perspective of employers. It also provides insight into appropriate policy solutions.

However, further research is needed to better understand:

- whether there are industry-specific issues relating to employing immigrants<sup>9</sup>;
- the experience of employers in “second-tier” immigration cities like Ottawa, Calgary, etc.; and
- the reasons for regional differences in employers' attitudes toward immigration and immigrants.

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<sup>9</sup> Few industrial observations could be made in this research because of small sample size.